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*Unknown City* (2001), *Intersections* (2000), *Gender Space Architecture* (1999) and *Strangely Familiar* (1995). Her talks and texts have been commissioned by artists such as Daniel Arsham and Bik Van Der Pol, and galleries, as the Baltic, the Hayward, Kunstmuseum Thon, the Serpentine, the Tate and the Whitechapel. She is on the Editorial Board for *ARQ* (Architectural Research Quarterly), *Haecceity*, *The Happy Hypocrite*, *The Issues* and the *Journal of Visual Culture in Britain*.

# TRAFALGAR SQUARE: *DÉTOURNEMENTS* *A Site-Writing*

In this paper I would like to argue that it is still possible to adopt a critical position with respect to architecture and urban space, and to exemplify this through a presentation of part of my recent project of site-writing. The paper is composed of three sections: first a discussion of how new possibilities for critical architecture require rethinking the relationship between criticism and design in terms of critical spatial practice, second a discussion of how Jean Laplanche's understanding of Copernican and Ptolemaic movement might inform an understanding of the tension between decentering and recentering in criticism – between the critic's objective, as Ptolemaic subject, to position the work according to his/her own agenda, situating it around the centre s/he occupies, and the potential Copernican revolution provoked by a work and its setting, which sends the critic off on new trajectories, and finally the presentation of 'Trafalgar Square: *Détournements* (A Site-Writing)'.<sup>1</sup>

## **Critical Architecture**

The 'Critical Architecture' conference which I co-organised with collaborators Jonathan Hill, Mark Dorrian and Murray Fraser questioned the assumed division between design and criticism and proposed instead that as forms of architectural

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1 Sections of this paper have been taken from Jane Rendell: "Critical Architecture: Between Criticism and Design." In: Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser and Mark Dorrian (eds.): *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–8 and Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism*, (London: IB Tauris, 2010). Many thanks to Routledge and IB Tauris for permission to reproduce these sections.

critical practice operating within an interdisciplinary context their relationship could be rethought.

Given the recent appropriation of the term interdisciplinarity in much of the literature concerning research in academe and higher education, where the word is now used in place of multidisciplinary, it seems important to briefly outline how an interdisciplinary approach can be distinguished from a multidisciplinary one. Long before its adoption and redefinition as part of recent research assessment and funding council terminology in the United Kingdom, the term interdisciplinary had been theorised and practiced in critical discourse.<sup>2</sup> As a term associated with a desire to produce political critique, interdisciplinary research calls into question the ideological apparatus that structures the terms and methods of specific disciplinary practices.<sup>3</sup> The writings of Julia Kristeva and Homi K. Bhabha among many others make this point clear.<sup>4</sup> The aim of such work is to question dominant processes that seek to control intellectual and creative production, and instead generate new resistant forms and modes of knowledge and understanding. It seems to me that the need for interdisciplinary research, as I have defined it, is crucial. It does not, I argue, reflect a desire to work to existing standards, rather it is the kind of transformative activity that intellectual and creative life requires to critique and question such 'norms'.

When Jonathan Hill and I first talked about our ambitions for the conference, we both wished to hold an event that would stimulate a discussion concerning the relationship between criticism and design in architecture and related disciplines.

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2 I would like to refute the position put forward by Peter Carl that: 'The term "interdisciplinary" comes from trying to find respect in research-driven universities [...]' and argue that an interdisciplinary drive comes from the desire to critique the ideological operations at work in many disciplinary conventions, and that it is the language of academic bureaucracy that is appropriating and attempting to de-politicize interdisciplinarity. See Peter Carl: "Practical Wisdom and Disciplinary Knowledge", *Architecture Research Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2005, pp. 5–8, p. 5.

3 This is a response to Felipe Hernández's provocation that 'interdisciplinary research' might only be 'the reserve of the wealthier schools of architecture in larger urban centres'. See Felipe Hernández: "The Scope of Critical Architecture." In: see note 2, pp. 8–9, p. 9. I argue that since the practice of interdisciplinary activity is a political necessity not a material luxury, it does not make sense to align interdisciplinary research with affluence, rather it should be understood to emerge from the desire for political critique.

4 See for example Julia Kristeva: "Institutional Interdisciplinarity in Theory and Practice: An Interview." In: Alex Coles and Alexia Defert (eds.): *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity, De-, Dis-, Ex*, v. 2, London: Black Dog Publishing, 1997, pp. 3–21. Homi K. Bhabha has described the moment of encounter between disciplines as an 'ambivalent movement between pedagogical and performative address'. See Homi K. Bhabha: *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 163.

The term 'Critical Architecture' emerged as a short-hand for critical architectural practice and as a simple way of marking a place between criticism and design in architecture. In tracking back through the key turns in this debate, it became apparent that this had been, to date, an almost entirely North American conversation. And that the time had come to find out how critical architecture was understood throughout the world.

Let's track back though for a few moments on the key turns in the debate up to 2004.

In his 1984 paper 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form' K. Michael Hays argues that critical architecture is possible and operates between two poles, resisting cultural determinism on the one hand and recognising that autonomy is required for engagement on the other; the work of Mies van der Rohe is cited as an example.<sup>5</sup> At the end of his article, he states this aspiration:

*If critical architectural design is resistant and oppositional, then architectural criticism—as activity and knowledge—should be openly critical as well.*<sup>6</sup>

In 2002 in the paper 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and other Moods of Modernism',<sup>7</sup> Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's advocate an architecture linked to 'the diagrammatic, the atmospheric and cool performance' as an alternative to the critical project which they describe as indexical, dialectical and as 'hot representation'.<sup>8</sup> Their approach is grounded in a rejection of a disciplinarity that is autonomous and a dialectic that is oppositional, as represented by the work of Hays and, also, Peter Eisenman.

The special issue of *Perspecta* in which Somol and Whiting's paper was published also contained articles in support of the critical architecture project. Diane Ghirardo, for example, argued from a historical perspective that as well as believing that architectural resistance to capitalism was impossible, architectural critic and historian Manfredo Tafuri had also noted that there was 'an architecture which attempted to redistribute the capitalist division of labour' and that this was evident in the work of Raymond Unwin, Ernst May and Hannes Meyer among

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5 K. Michael Hays: "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form", *Perspecta*, vol. 21, 1981, pp. 14–29.

6 Ibid., p. 27.

7 Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting: "Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism." In: Michael Osman, Adam Ruedig, Matthew Seidel, and Lisa Tilney (eds.): *Mining Autonomy*, a special issue of *Perspecta*, 33, 2002, pp. 72–7.

8 Ibid., p. 74.

others.<sup>9</sup> While a number of articles have been published subsequently, in the *Harvard Design Review* and elsewhere, which take up various positions around the post-critical, from those who are somewhat disbelieving of the post-critical, to those who support the call by a younger generation to engage with market forces and reject theory.<sup>10</sup>

Like many of the contributors to *Critical Architecture* I find myself in favour of some of the features attributed to a post-critical architecture by Somol and Whiting, namely that we should move from architecture as discipline to performance or practice, and regard the participation of users as integral to architectural production. However, contra Somol and Whiting, I strongly believe that the social and the cultural are highly relevant aspects of architectural practice. Given the disastrous changes to the earth's climate caused by carbon dioxide emissions, along with the intensification of imperialist aggression by oil dependant nations as demand outstrips supply, for me it is not possible to go along with corporate capitalism in a pragmatic mode, without critique—to do so would be to support without question the inequalities that are integral aspects of this economic system.

In an interview with the editors of the 'Mining Autonomy' issue of *Perspecta*, Hays asserted that for him the term critical derived from critical theory and could be summed up as: 'the constant imagination, search for, and construction of alternatives [...]' so claiming creativity and productivity for the critical and effectively neutralising the post-critical position.<sup>11</sup> My own position strongly resonates with this.

If, following Raymond Geuss (in turn following Marx), critical theory can be defined in terms of self-reflectivity and the desire to change the world,<sup>12</sup> then when any activity takes on the task of self-reflection and evidence a desire for so-

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9 Diane Y. Ghirardo: "Manfredo Tafuri and Architectural Theory in the U.S., 1970–2000." In: Michael Osman, Adam Ruedig, Matthew Seidel, and Lisa Tilney (eds.): *Mining Autonomy*, a special issue of *Perspecta*, 33, 2002, pp. 38–47, p. 40.

10 For a discussion that examines the relationship between critical and post-critical in terms of an intellectual genealogy see George Baird: "'Criticality' and its Discontents", *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 21, Fall 2004/Winter 2005. For a paper that rejects the post-critical position, see Reinhold Martin: "Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realis," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 22, Spring/Summer 2005, pp. 104–109; and for one which supports it, see for example, Michael Speaks: *Architectural Record*, June 2005, pp. 73–5.

11 K. Michael Hays, Lauren Kogod and the Editors: "Twenty Projects at the Boundaries of the Architectural Discipline examined in relation to the Historical and Contemporary Debates over Autonomy." In: Michael Osman, Adam Ruedig, Matthew Seidel, and Lisa Tilney (eds.): *Mining Autonomy*, a special issue of *Perspecta*, 33, 2002., pp. 54–71, p. 58.

12 Raymond Geuss: *The Idea of Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 2.

cial change it can be described as critical. It is not clear to me then why the contemporary condition of late and almost collapsed capitalism would disallow this position. By placing architecture in an interdisciplinary context and considering its various activities as forms of critical practice that operate through buildings, drawings, texts and actions, it is possible to think of criticism and design as forms of critical practice, and examine the relationship between them.

In my recent book *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* I coin the term ‘critical spatial practice’ to define modes of self-reflective public art which seek to question the social conditions of the sites into which they intervene.<sup>13</sup> Through the process of writing this book I came to understand that my own position between art, architecture and theory was constantly changing and influenced my interpretative accounts. I concluded *Art and Architecture* by arguing that criticism is a form of situated practice in its own right, one that is critical and spatial.<sup>14</sup>

My current work explores the position of the author, not only in relation to theoretical ideas, art objects, and architectural spaces, but also to the site of writing itself. This interest has evolved into a practice that I call ‘site-writing’, an activity that investigates the often-changing positions we occupy as critics materially, conceptually, emotionally and ideologically. ‘Site-Writing’ is what happens when discussions concerning site-specificity extend to investigate the sites of relation between two subjects—the writer (the critic/theorist/historian) and his/her subject matter—here the design of the structure of the text and the spatial qualities of the writing become as important in making an argument as the content.<sup>15</sup>

This paper takes the spatial structure of a *détournement* of the public art of London’s Trafalgar Square, so I want to move now and consider the spatial form of the *détournement*, in terms of decentring.

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13 Jane Rendell: *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: IB Tauris, 2006).

14 The key instigator for my site-writing project was my 1998 essay entitled ‘Doing it, (Un)Doing it, (Over)Doing it Yourself: Rhetorics of Architectural Abuse’, Jonathan Hill (ed.): *Occupying Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 229–46. I then developed it as a pedagogic tool through site-specific writing courses at the Bartlett from 2001, and as a mode of spatializing art-writing through a series of texts and works, usually written in response to invitations brought together in Jane Rendell: *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010). Elsewhere I have called this form of criticism—‘architecture-writing’. See, for example, Jane Rendell: “Architecture-writing.” In: Jane Rendell (ed.): *Critical Architecture, Special Issue of The Journal of Architecture*, June, vol. 10, no. 3 (2005) pp. 255–64.

15 On art and site-specificity see for example, Alex Coles (ed.): *Site Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000; Nick Kaye: *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place And Documentation*, London: Routledge, 2000; and Miwon Kwon: *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002.

### Jean Laplanche's 'Copernican Revolution'

If criticism can be defined by the purpose of providing a commentary (for some a judgement, for others a discriminating point of view, for others yet a response or perhaps even a point of departure) on a cultural work—art, literature, film and architecture—then criticism always has an other in mind. If so, the central task of criticism might be considered as: how does one make a relationship with an other? It is this question, which is at the heart of psychoanalysis. As Jessica Benjamin writes:

*An intersubjective theory of the self is one that poses the question of how and whether the self can actually achieve a relationship to an outside other without, through identification, assimilating or being assimilated by it.*<sup>16</sup>

In thinking more carefully about the position of the other in criticism and psychoanalysis, the work of Jean Laplanche is illuminating. For Laplanche, it is the embedding of the alterity of the mother in the child, which places an other in the subject. This other is also an other to the mother—as it comes from her unconscious. Thus the message imparted to the subject by the other (for Laplanche the mother or concrete other) is an enigma both to the receiver but also to the sender of the message: the 'messages are enigmatic because [...] [they] are strange to themselves.'<sup>17</sup>

In Laplanche's view, some aspects of the adult's enigmatic message are translated, while others are excluded and repressed, becoming unconscious.<sup>18</sup> In his account repression—the negative side of the translation of the enigmatic message—produces dislocation.<sup>19</sup> During the process of repression the initial Copernican relationship, where the centre of gravity is located in the other, radically alters to become a Ptolemaic one, centered on the self. According to Laplanche, once the ego is constituted as an agency, the psychic system shuts in on itself, and the external otherness of *der Andere* (the other person) undergoes primary repression to become the internal otherness of *das Andere* (the other thing).<sup>20</sup>

16 Jessica Benjamin: *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 80.

17 Cathy Caruth: *An Interview with Jean Laplanche*, © 2001 Cathy Caruth. See <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.101/11.2caruth.txt> (accessed 3 May 2006).

18 Jean Laplanche: "A Short Treatise on the Unconscious" [1993] translated by Luke Thurston, *Essays on Otherness*, pp. 84–116, p. 97.

19 Ibid., p. 104.

20 Jean Laplanche: "The Aims of the Psychoanalytic Process," translated by Joan Tambureno, *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, v. 5 (Spring–Fall 1997) pp. 69–79, p. 75.

Laplanche argues that analysis is a return to the originary situation, which finds its ‘immediate centre of gravity in the other’,<sup>21</sup> and that it is sometimes able to maintain an ‘opening-up’, which can be ‘transferred into other fields of otherness’. Laplanche calls this ‘the transference of the transference ... the transference of the relation to the enigma as such’.<sup>22</sup>

To explain the ‘cyclical character of the dynamics of transference’, Laplanche uses a spiral, more precisely a helix, to represent the process of analysis. He distinguishes between a movement around the centre of a circle, which passes repeatedly through the same points on the circumference, and a journey, which, by moving forward along the axis of a helix, passes through the same points but in different elaborations.<sup>23</sup> Laplanche compares the choosing of the moment for the end of analysis to the astronaut’s option of possible ‘windows’ for take-off, where to miss a window is to be pulled back into the earth’s gravity for one more turn.<sup>24</sup> The parameters at stake in analysis he says are no less complex, indeed even more conjectural and aleatory than interstellar navigation. The end of analysis involves not only internal dynamics (turns and windows) but also the external situation, which includes the provocation of the other.<sup>25</sup>

Laplanche’s ‘conclusion’ concerning the Copernican or ‘decentering revolution’ is as follows:

*Internal alien-ness maintained, held in place by external alien-ness; external alien-ness, in turn, held in place by the enigmatic relation of the other to his own internal alien ...*<sup>26</sup>

In order to explore how Laplanche’s understanding of Copernican and Ptolemaic movement informs art and culture, this configuration explores site-writing’s key structuring mechanism—the tension between decenterings and recenterings—between the critic’s objective, as Ptolemaic subject, to position the work according to

21 Jean Laplanche: “The Unfinished Copernican Revolution” [1992] translated by Luke Thurston, *Essays on Otherness*, edited by John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999) pp. 52–83, p. 83.

Fletcher explains that Laplanche’s neologism *étrangereté* has been translated as ‘alien-ness’ rather than ‘strangeness’ in order to denote the irreducible strangeness of the alien’s external origin, as opposed to the subjective and more relative term ‘strange’. See p. 62, footnote 21.

22 Jean Laplanche: “Sublimation and/or Inspiration,” translated by Luke Thurston and John Fletcher, *New Formations* v. 48 (2002) pp. 30–50, p. 50.

23 Jean Laplanche: “Transference: its Provocation by the Analyst” [1992] translated by Luke Thurston, *Essays on Otherness*, edited by John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999) pp. 214–233, p. 231.

24 Ibid., pp. 231–232, see figures 1 and 2.

25 Ibid., p. 232.

26 Laplanche, see note 21, p. 80.



his/her own agenda, situating it around the centre s/he occupies, and the potential Copernican revolution provoked by a work and its setting, which sends the critic off on new trajectories. Through a series of *détournements* the sculptures at the heart of London's Trafalgar Square are decentered, relocating the critical gaze first to the 'other' within—the repressed acts of resistance which have taken place in this public square, then to the 'other' without—the sites of battle in colonial India to which a number of the sculptures refer, and finally to aspects of contemporary oil wars which are persistently being overlooked (the other without's other within)—sites of destruction in Iraq.

The paper was originally written in June 2007 for a talk commissioned by the National Gallery, London. As part of Architecture Week they invited a number of architectural historians to talk about the architecture depicted in various paintings in the gallery, because of my work on public art they suggested that I might discuss the sculptures in front of the gallery, in Trafalgar Square.<sup>27</sup>

### **Trafalgar Square: *Détournements* (A Site-Writing)**

The term *détournement* used by the Situationists, refers to a particular critical strategy, where images produced by the spectacle, are altered or subverted so that their meaning opposes rather than supports the status quo. In the following *détournement* of the public sculptures of Trafalgar Square, I take the reader on a tour interrupted by three detours. Each detour, informed by the critical spatial practice adopted by a specific artwork, is in itself a *détournement*.<sup>28</sup> These detours interrupt and subvert the dominant operations of power in this urban place, working through site-writing to decentre the sculptures from their position in a square, which aims to maintain itself at the centre of empire.

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With the Palace of Westminster to the South, Whitehall to the East and Buckingham Palace to the west, Trafalgar Square is situated at the symbolic seat of pow-

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<sup>27</sup> This text was originally written as a talk commissioned by the National Gallery, London and delivered on 6 June 2007. As part of Architecture Week a number of architectural historians were invited to talk about the architecture depicted in various paintings in the gallery, because of my work on public art it was suggested that I might discuss the sculptures in front of the gallery in Trafalgar Square. This contextual detail is important because it locates the site of the delivery of the talk—the National Gallery overlooking Trafalgar Square. A new version of the talk was later delivered as a paper at *Power and Space*, University of Cambridge, 5–7 December 2007 and has been further developed here.

<sup>28</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these works and my understanding of how public art can operate as a 'critical spatial practice' see note 13.

er and the centre of government. It is enclosed by structures of religious, imperial and cultural capital: on the north side, the National Gallery; on the east side, the church of St Martin's-in-the-Fields and South Africa House; and on the west side, Canada House.

Trafalgar Square was built based on the architect Charles Barry's designs of 1840 for the site of the King's News.<sup>29</sup> A 5.5 metre statue of Admiral Nelson stands at its centre on top of a 46 metre granite column. The sandstone statue at the top, sculpted by E. H. Baily, a member of the Royal Academy, faces south towards the Palace of Westminster. The monument was designed by architect William Railton in 1838 and constructed by the firm Peto & Grissell between 1840 and 1843. The top of the Corinthian column (based on the Temple of Mars Ultor in Rome) is embellished with bronze acanthus leaves cast from British cannons. Four bronze panels, made from captured French guns, decorate the square pedestal and depict Nelson's four great battle victories: to the west, The Battle of St Vincent (1797); to the north, The Battle of The Nile (1798); to the east, The Battle of Copenhagen (1801); and to the south, The Battle of Trafalgar (1805) where the British Navy defeated the French and Spanish to establish British Naval supremacy, and in which Nelson lost his life.

*Fig. 1: John Edward Carew, The Battle of Trafalgar (1805) (1838) Trafalgar Square, London.*



<sup>29</sup> All details of the history of the art and architecture of Trafalgar Square are taken from Rodney Mace: *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2005).

### Detour 1: *The Battle of Orgreave*

Artist Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (17 June 2001) commissioned by Art Angel was a restaging of one of the most violent confrontations of the miners' strike that took place on 18 June 1984 in the town of Orgreave outside Sheffield in the United Kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Orgreave marked a turning point in the strike and the first use of military strategies by the police for settling resistance. Deller's apparent concern was with an accurate restaging of the events as they had occurred. He involved a battle enactment society to restage the battle: some miners chose to play themselves and some sons played their fathers, though only one policeman played himself.

By appearing to fall in line with the principles of re-enactment and the society's dogged desire for so-called historical accuracy in replaying the battle scenes, Deller's approach revealed a certain irony in pointing to its own obsession with historical facts. The presence of cameras filming the battle for broadcast as a documentary film directed for television by Mike Figgis enhanced the role-playing aspect of the event, prioritizing a consideration of the 'facts' not as they had occurred in the past but as they were being constructed in the present. In attempting to recreate a political struggle that took place at a specific moment, *The Battle of Orgreave* shows how an act of remembering the past can reconfigure a particular place as a critical space in the present. In so doing, it demonstrates the revolutionary impetus offered by a specific historical moment and the importance repetition can offer in recognizing this potential and keeping it alive.

Trafalgar Square has been the site of rebellion since its construction. In 1848, 100,000 Chartists occupied Trafalgar Square arguing for Universal suffrage for all men over the age of 21, equal-sized electoral districts, voting by secret ballot, an end to the need for a property qualification for Parliament, pay for members of Parliament and the annual election of Parliament. The most violent demonstration in Trafalgar Square I can remember took place in 1990 against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's new policies for extracting a poll tax, an unjust form of tax, which demanded a uniform fixed amount per individual regardless of income.

On 9 June 2007, the weekend after I delivered the first version of this text as a talk in the National Gallery overlooking Trafalgar Square, I was part of *Enough*, a protest against the occupation of Palestine. It took place in Trafalgar Square,

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30 See Gerrie van Noord (ed.): *Off Limits, 40 Artangel Projects* (London: Artangel, 2002) pp. 190–195 and Jeremy Deller: *The Battle of Orgreave* (London: Artangel, 2002). See also Dave Beech, review of Jeremy Deller: "The Battle of Orgreave," *Art Monthly* (July–August 2001) pp. 38–39 and Rendell, note 13, pp. 61–63.

a public space at the heart of the capital city of a democratic country, but one at war, with military strikes perpetrated by the British army, along with its allies namely the United States and Israel, not just in Palestine but also Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. On that day, a message was delivered via video link-up from Ismail Haniya, a senior political leader of Hamas, and at that time, the democratically elected Prime Minister of the Palestine National Authority. Less than a week later, on 14 June 2007, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, member of the Fatah party, dismissed him from office. Haniya has refused to acknowledge this dismissal and continues to exercise *de facto* authority in the Gaza Strip.<sup>31</sup> His party Hamas is classified as a terrorist organisation by the United States and European Union, but the government of the United Kingdom only place its military arm, Hamas Izz al-Din al-Qassem Brigades, in this category.<sup>32</sup>

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Let us continue our tour of Trafalgar Square and take a look at some of the statues. Along the base of the National Gallery are three busts. First there is David Beatty who took part in actions during World War I. He was appointed Admiral of the Fleet and served as First Sea Lord until 1927 when he was created 1st Earl Beatty, Viscount Borodale and Baron Beatty of the North Sea and Brooksby. Next there is John Jellicoe who was in command of the British fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. He was made a Viscount in 1918 and became Governor-General of New Zealand from September 1920 to November 1924. On his return to England in 1925, he was made an Earl. And finally there is Andrew Cunningham who was Admiral of the Fleet in World War II.

There are also a number of freestanding statues. To the south there is Charles I, put in place in 1676 before the square itself was built, removed by Cromwell and reinstated by Charles II. At the corners of the square are four plinths, three of which hold statues: to the north east, there is George IV from the 1840s; to the south east, Major General Sir Henry Havelock, made by William Behnes in 1861; and to the south west, General Sir Charles James Napier, made by George Cannon Adams in 1855.

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<sup>31</sup> See for example [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismail\\_Haniyeh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismail_Haniyeh) (accessed 8 June 2008).

<sup>32</sup> See <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/legislation/current-legislation/terrorism-act-2000/proscribed-terrorist-groups?version=1> (accessed 8 June 2008). See also <http://tna.europarchive.org/20100419081706/http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/terrorist-threat/proscribed-terrorist-orgs/proscribed-terrorist-groups/> (accessed 14 July 2010).



*Fig. 2: George Cannon Adams, General Sir Charles James Napier (1855).*

### **Detour 2: Better Scenery**

In 1965–1966 Robert Smithson worked as a consultant artist for an architectural firm called TAMS on designs for Dallas Fort Worth Airport. The project prompted his consideration of how artworks might be viewed from the air but also how to communicate aspects of these exterior artworks to passengers in the terminal building. This latter aspect he termed the ‘non-site’,<sup>33</sup> and his interest in the ‘dialogue between the indoor and the outdoor’ led him to develop ‘a method or a dialectic that involved ... site and non-site’.<sup>34</sup>

Smithson’s radical gesture, which located the site of the work outside the territory of the gallery and the gallery itself as the non-site where the work is documented, has been recuperated today. The contemporary commissioning process has established a new terminology that reverses Smithson’s dialectic. Many pub

<sup>33</sup> Robert Smithson: “Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site” [1967] Jack Flam (ed.): *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 52–60. See also Suzaan Boettger: *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002) pp. 55–58.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Smithson: “Earth Symposium at White Museum, Cornell University” [1969], Flam, *Robert Smithson*, pp. 177–187, p. 178.

lie art galleries term those works they commission for sites outside the gallery, 'off-site', reclaiming the gallery position as the site of central importance to art.<sup>35</sup>

As part of a two-year 'off-site' programme the Camden Arts Centre invited Adam Chodsko to make a new work.<sup>36</sup> His intervention, *Better Scenery* (2000) consisted of two signs, one located in the Arizona Desert and the other in the car park of a new shopping centre, the O2 Centre, in Camden.<sup>37</sup> The plain yellow lettering on the black face of each sign gives clear directions of how to get to the other sign. Both sets of directions end with the phrase: 'Situated here, in this place, is a sign which describes the location of this sign you have just finished reading.'<sup>38</sup>

The two signs make no attempt to point to their immediate context, only to each other. Their relationship is self-referential. In speaking about where they are not, *Better Scenery*, described by Chodsko as 'an escapist proposition', critiques the ethos of site-specificity and accessibility behind many off-site programmes.

I'd like to return to General Sir Charles James Napier for a moment. Here is a short extract concerning a key moment in his life from Rodney Mace's *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire*:

*The two armies met at a dry river bed near the small town of Miari just south of the capital. The battle was fierce, but the Amir's force, armed only with sword and musket, were no match, despite their superior numbers, for the bayonet and cannon. At the end of the day, the battle was over. The Amir surrendered; 5,000 of their men were killed. The British casualties were 256. Undoubtedly Napier felt it had been a good day (he received £70,000 bounty for his success) and that history would be on his side. Was it not a law of nature 'that barbarous peoples should be absorbed by their civilized neighbours?' Within a few months the few remaining Amirs were crushed. By the middle of August 1843 Sind was formally annexed to the rest of British India. Napier was soon promoted to the post of Governor of the new territory,*

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35 See Rendell, note 13, pp. 23–40.

36 This programme included Anna Best: *MECCA*, State Mecca Bingo Hall; Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (America)* (1994–95); Maurice O'Connell: *On Finchley Road*; and Orla Barry: *Across an Open Space*. Other artists worked with participants at Swiss Cottage library and the Royal Free NHS Trust.

37 See Adam Chodsko: *Plans and Spells* (London: Film & Video Umbrella, 2002) pp. 40–41 and Adam Chodsko: "Out of Place," In: John Carson and Susannah Silver (eds.): *Out of the Bubble, Approaches to Contextual Practice within Fine Art Education* (London: London Institute, 2000) pp. 31–36.

38 Chodsko, *Plans and Spells*, see note 37, pp. 40–41.



*which he ruled in 'rude and vigorous manner' for four years. In 1847 he returned to England, and after one more brief visit to India in 1849–1850 he settled down on a small estate at Oaklands near Portsmouth.*<sup>39</sup>

\*

Now let us continue our tour to the once-empty fourth plinth in the northwest corner of the square. This was intended to hold a statue of William IV, but to insufficient funds it initially remained empty and later agreement could not be reached over which monarch or military hero to place there. In 1999, the Royal Society of Arts conceived the idea of the *Fourth Plinth Project*, which temporarily occupied the plinth with a succession of works commissioned from three contemporary artists Mark Wallinger, Bill Woodrow and Rachel Whiteread. After several years in which the plinth stood empty, the new Greater London Authority assumed responsibility and started its own series of temporary exhibitions starting with Marc Quinn's *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (15 September 2005).<sup>40</sup> Sculpted by an artist known at the time for his controversial self-portrait, *Self* (1991), a refrigerated cast of his own head made with nine pints of his own blood, his statue for the fourth plinth, was a 3.6 metre white marble torso-bust of Alison Lapper. Lapper is also an artist, born with no arms and shortened legs due to a condition called phocomelia, the visible effects of which are indistinguishable from those of individuals born to women who were given thalidomide during their pregnancies.

Lapper is the only female statue in Trafalgar Square; she is also the only non-military figure, with the exception of the mermaids, dolphins and lions, and of course the square's fleshy inhabitants. We might consider her an ordinary person, a civilian, but as a woman who is disabled but also pregnant she is also extraordinary. Indeed we are encouraged to think of her inclusion in this square of monarchs, generals and admirals as a remarkable act, one that highlights the democratic nature of the government of the United Kingdom, its interest in culture and the promotion of equality. We might compare her disfigurement to Nelson's lost arm,<sup>41</sup> and note, as the artist himself does, how her perfect rendering and composure refigures the idea of beauty in contemporary art.<sup>42</sup> But I want to draw out another *figure* here and end with a final detour.

39 See note 29, pp. 115–6. Mace quotes from T. R. E. Holmes: *Four Famous Soldiers* (London: 1889) p. 28.

40 See <http://www.london.gov.uk/fourthplinth/> (accessed 20 June 2008).

41 See [http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/nwh\\_gfx\\_en/ART30597.html](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/nwh_gfx_en/ART30597.html) (accessed 8 June 2008).

42 Charles Darwent: "The Battle of Trafalgar," *The Independent on Sunday* (4 September 2005). See [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4159/is\\_20050904/ai\\_n15331791/pg\\_1?tag=artBody;col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4159/is_20050904/ai_n15331791/pg_1?tag=artBody;col1) (accessed 8 June 2008).

Fig. 3: *Marc Quinn, Alison Lapper Pregnant (2005).*



### **Detour 3: *The Siege of Fallujah***

On 2 June 2007, the weekend before my talk at the National Gallery, after taking photographs in Trafalgar Square, I walked down the Mall to the Institute of Contemporary Art to see an exhibition called *Memorial to Iraq* (2007).<sup>43</sup> This included a work called *Fallujah*, designed by Studio Orta, written and directed by Jonathan Holmes. *Fallujah* is a piece of documentary theatre in which professional actors performed the events of the siege among the audience and the artefacts comprising the set in a disused brewery in London's Brick Lane. The publication of the script also includes material drawn from interviews carried out by the playwright Holmes, drawings of the set by Studio Orta, an essay by triple Nobel Prize nominee Scilla Elworthy, and testimony from those at the heart of the siege: Iraqi civilians, clerics, the United States military, politicians, journalists, medics, aid workers and the British Army.<sup>44</sup>

The sieges of Fallujah in April and November 2004 are one of the most extensive human rights violations of recent times. Breaching over 70 articles of the Geneva conventions, United States forces bombed schools and hospitals, sniped civilians (including children) holding white flags, cut off water and medical supplies. Journalists were actively prevented from entering the city. There is

<sup>43</sup> *Memorial to Iraq* (23 May–27 June 2007) Institute of Contemporary Art, London. See for example <http://www.ica.org.uk/Memorial%20to%20the%20Iraq%20War+13499.twl> (accessed 8 June 2008).

<sup>44</sup> See Jonathan Holmes (ed.): *Fallujah: Eyewitness Testimony from Iraq's Besieged City* (London: Constable and Robinson Ltd., 2007).



evidence to show that chemical weapons, classified as weapons of mass destruction by the United Nations, whose production and stockpiling was outlawed by the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993, were used in these attacks including white phosphorus, napalm and depleted uranium.<sup>45</sup> Regarding their use in Fallujah, journalist, activist and writer George Monbiot reports:

*Did US troops use chemical weapons in Fallujah? The answer is yes. The proof is not to be found in the documentary broadcast on Italian TV last week, which has generated gigabytes of hype on the Internet. It's a turkey, whose evidence that white phosphorous was fired at Iraqi troops is flimsy and circumstantial. But the bloggers debating it found the smoking gun.*

*The first account they unearthed comes from a magazine published by the US Army. In the March 2005 edition of Field Artillery, officers from the 2nd Infantry's Fire Support Element boast about their role in the attack on Fallujah in November last year. On page 26 is the following text: 'White Phosphorus. WP provided to be an effective and versatile munition. We used it for screening missions at two breeches and, later in the fight, as a potent psychological weapon against the insurgents in trench lines and spider holes when we could not get effects on them with HE [high explosives]. We fired 'shake and bake' missions at the insurgents, using WP to flush them out and HE to take them out.'*<sup>46</sup>

White phosphorus is fat-soluble and burns spontaneously on exposure to the air. On contact with human skin, it chars and blackens the flesh, causing deep wounds, extreme forms of disfigurement and death.

The army of the United States declare that they only use white phosphorus to 'screen' the areas they attack. In so doing, they appropriate the symbolic role of white as a colour of peace and enlightenment, and instead its 'light' operates as

45 See <http://justice4lebanon.wordpress.com/2007/04/26/use-of-napalm-like-white-phosphorus-bombs-in-lebanon/> (accessed 2 December 2007) and <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1108/dailyUpdate.html>. (accessed 2 December 2007). The documentary, Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealto: *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*, shown in Italy on RAI on 1 November 2005, to which Monbiot refers, can be viewed here: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4100751410795302323#>. (accessed 14 July 2010).

46 George Monbiot is quoting from Captain James T. Cobb, First Lieutenant Christopher A. La-Cour and Sergeant First Class William H. Hight, 'TF 2-2 in FSE AAR: Indirect Fires in the Battle of Fallujah', *Field Artillery* (March–April 2005) p. 26. See George Monbiot: "War without Rules," Holmes (ed.), see note 44, pp. 107–112, pp. 107–108, originally published in the *Guardian*, 15 November 2005. See also <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2005/2-2AARlow.pdf> (accessed 11 July 2008).

a blinding mechanism, part of a contemporary Christian crusade to gain control over many Muslim countries of the Middle East and the oil or 'black gold' they contain.

The sculptures in Trafalgar Square are all made of bronze, which over the years has darkened to become almost black.

*Alison Lapper* stands out as an exception—female, naked and made of white marble. The public exhibition of her white disfigured body is displayed as a sign of democracy, while the black disfigured bodies of Iraqis, charred by white phosphorus attacks, are hidden from view, their very existence denied by a government who conducts its wars in the name of democracy.

### **Dedication**

Three years have passed since I first wrote this paper, in that time white phosphorus has been used by the Israeli Defence Force not as a screen to 'flush out insurgents' but directly to attack unarmed women and children in Gaza. This paper is dedicated to them and any money or fees earned from its presentation and publication will go to Medical Aid for Palestinians.